

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 7-23, 25-37, and 41-47 are present in the application after the foregoing amendments. Claims 5, 6, 24, and 38-40 have been canceled. Claims 1, 7, 13, and 41 have been amended. Claims 45-47 are new.

In the final Office Action mailed September 9, 2003, the Examiner rejected claim 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112. Claim 24 has been canceled, rendering this rejection moot.

Claims 42-44 were allowed, and claims 6, 23, 25, and 26 were found to be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112. Claims 10, 20, and 22 were objected to but found to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The remaining claims stand rejected.

Applicant requests further examination of the claims.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 6 and intervening dependent claim 5. In view of the finding of allowability of claim 6, applicant submits that claims 1-4, 7-23, and 25-37 are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 41 has been amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 10 and intervening dependent claim 9. In addition, claim 41 has been amended to recite forming a mask using a resist layer directly on the nitride layer to define photolithographic openings for forming at least one dielectric trench. As argued in the previous amendment, this masking step is carried out directly onto the nitride layer. There is no sandwiching of the nitride layer between two oxide layers as taught by Sugisaka et al. Moreover, if one were to apply the teachings of Sugisaka et al. to the present invention, the nitride layer would have another layer formed of oxide on the top surface, which would then be masked. Hence, the nitride layer would not be etched and etching of the trench would require at least one additional step. Applicant submits that claim 41 is allowable for all of these reasons.

New claims 45-47 are allowable claims 23, 25, and 26 rewritten into independent form. More particularly, claim 45 is a combination of claim 1 and claim 23. Claim 46 is a combination of claim 1, claim 13, and allowable claim 25. Claim 47 is claim 46 and allowable claim 26. In view of the finding of allowability of claims 23, 25, and 26, applicant submits that new claims 45-47 are also allowable.

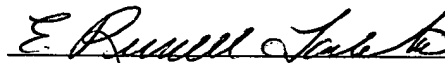
In view of the foregoing, applicant submits that all of the claims remaining in this application are clearly in condition for allowance. In the event the Examiner finds minor informalities that can be resolved by telephone conference, the Examiner is urged to contact applicant's undersigned representative by telephone at (206) 622-4900 in order to expeditiously resolve prosecution of this application. Consequently, early and favorable action allowing these claims and passing this case to issuance is respectfully solicited.

The Director is authorized to charge any additional fees due by way of this Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 19-1090.

Respectfully submitted,

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